

# Louisiana Believes

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Aligning Priorities for Students with Significant  
Cognitive Disabilities in Louisiana

# Building Meaningful Educational Opportunities for Students with Significant Disabilities

Louisiana believes that all students, including students with the most significant disabilities, should be held to the highest possible grade-level expectations. Over that past three years, much progress has been made to deliver on this belief, including:

- the new Louisiana Connectors **standards** in ELA, mathematics, and science
- the new aligned LEAP Connect statewide **alternate assessment**
- an established **graduation pathway** to a high school diploma for students assessed on an alternate assessment



# Louisiana Connectors

In the spring of 2016 the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved the Louisiana Student Standards in English language arts and math and in winter 2016 BESE approved aligned standards, known as the Louisiana Connectors, for students with significant disabilities.

The Connectors are not learning standards that exist separate and apart from common expectations we have for all students. They are designed to provide developmentally-appropriate content benchmarks towards the standards across all grade levels.

# LEAP Connect Assessment



## KNOW THE TEST

### LEAP CONNECT ASSESSMENT

Each year, students enrolled in grades 3-8 and high school who meet the participation criteria for alternate assessments take a state test to measure their academic progress in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. The test is an alternative assessment to LEAP 2025.

**THE LEAP CONNECT ASSESSMENT IS DESIGNED TO WORK WITH THE WAY YOUR STUDENT COMMUNICATES.**

**BUILT-IN SUPPORTS INCLUDE:**

- REDUCED PASSAGE LENGTH IN READING.
- PICTURES AND GRAPHICS TO HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND.
- MODELS IN READING, WRITING AND MATHEMATICS.
- COMMON GEOMETRIC SHAPES AND SMALLER NUMBERS ON THE MATHEMATICS TEST.
- ANSWER OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR USE WITH ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION DEVICES.
- ONE-ON-ONE ADMINISTRATION BY TEACHER OR ANOTHER TRAINED STAFF MEMBER, AND
- ANY ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS AS DESCRIBED IN THE STUDENT'S IEP.

## Required Course

### Experiences:

- English= 4 credits
- Math= 4 credits
- Science= 2 credits
- Social Studies= 2 credits
- Electives= 2-4 credits
- Career Prep= 7-9 credits

# Graduation Pathway

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Students assessed on the alternate assessment are able to pursue an alternative pathway to a Louisiana High School Diploma.

A student who takes the alternate assessment may be awarded a diploma when they have met all pathway requirements including evidence that there is a plan for the students to successfully transition away from services provided by the school system.

The diploma document is identical to a regular high school diploma and, like all students, the transcript differentiates the course of study completed.

# Building Meaningful Educational Opportunities for Students with Significant Disabilities

To build upon our progress, the Department is engaging in a series of actions to ensure these educational opportunities are available to the appropriate population of students, including:

- providing oversight and technical assistance to school systems
- strengthening statewide accountability systems
- reviewing state policy



# Louisiana Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria

**IEP teams** determine if a student should participate in the alternate assessment, based on the state's criteria:

- 1. The student has a disability that significantly impacts cognitive function and/or adaptive behavior.**
  - For students who have not completed the 5th grade, an eligible student is functioning **3 or more standard deviations** below the mean in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior.
  - For students who have completed 5th grade, an eligible student is functioning **2.3 or more standard deviations** below the mean in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior.
  - For students who have completed the 5th grade functioning between **2.0 and 2.29 or more standard deviations** below the mean in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior may be eligible for alternate assessment participation if the IEP team provides additional empirical evidence an alternate assessment identification is appropriate for the student.
1. The student requires extensive modified instruction aligned with the Louisiana Connectors to acquire, maintain, and generalize skills.
2. The decision to include the student in the alternate assessment is not solely based certain factors (placement, behavior, English learner status, etc.).

# Providing Oversight and Technical Assistance to School Systems

Teams are now required to document specific elements from the cognitive and adaptive assessments in the state IEP system.

## Intellectual Functioning / Cognitive Assessments

Assessment Completed:  Yes  No

Assessment Name: Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities (WJ)

Date Administered: 7/11/2018

Standard Deviation\*: - 3.02

## Adaptive Behavior Assessments

Assessment Completed:  Yes  No

Assessment Name: Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS)

Date Administered: 7/12/2018

Standard Deviation\*: - 3.42

# Providing Oversight and Technical Assistance to School Systems

The system will automatically add those results to the IEP's LEAP Connect form, the place where the IEP team documents that the student meets the state's criteria.

SER Individualized Education Program | LA Department of Education

IEP Forms | 8. LEAP Connect | Validate | Official / Signed | Delete

System: Vernon Parish | Student Name: DELCO, CHASATIE | Grade: | [add/delete forms to IEP](#)  
Meeting Date(s): 7/17/2018 | DOB: 1/19/1990 | Local Id: 433773124

In order to protect student privacy per RS 17:3914, refrain from using student name, date of birth, and other personally identifiable information.

LEAP Alternate Assessment, LEAP Connect Participation Criteria Grades 3-11

Exceptionality Detail(s)

Primary: -- SELECT ONE --  
Other: -- SELECT ONE --

Evaluation Results Detail

Assessment Type	Complete	Name of Assessment	Date Administered	Standard Deviation
Intellectual Functioning / Cognitive Assessments	Yes	Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI)	7/2/2018	-1.11
Adaptive Behavior Assessments	Yes	Scales of Independent Behavior - Revised (SIB)	7/2/2018	3.33

LEAP Alternate Assessment, LEAP Connect was developed for students for whom there is evidence of a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior. To be eligible to participate in LEAP Connect, the response to each of the four statements below must be "Agree."

Criterion #1

Evidence of a Significant Cognitive Disability or Multiple Disabilities (select one)

Agree  Disagree

The student's cognitive and/or adaptive behavior has been assessed and the student is functioning:

- A. 3 or more standard deviations below the mean.
- B. Between 2.3 and 2.9 standard deviations below the mean and has completed fifth grade.
- C. Between 2.0 and 2.29 standard deviations below the mean and has completed fifth grade - additional documentation required.

# Strengthening Statewide Accountability Systems

Earlier this year, the state board of education approved changes to state policy to strengthen the accountability system for the alternate assessment.

**State policy now requires any Louisiana school system with more than 1.0% of students participating in an alternate assessment to request a waiver from the LDOE.**

- LDOE reviews waivers to verify that students meet the state's participation criteria
- Students who do not meet that state's criteria receive a zero on the assessment and count as non-proficient

This waiver does not “cap” the percentage of students who can participate in an alternate assessment. Instead, it builds a process to ensure students meet the state's eligibility criteria, so they are participating in the most appropriate assessment of their knowledge.

# Reviewing Policy to Ensure Students Participate in the Most Appropriate Assessment of their Knowledge

ESSA states that only students with the most significant ***cognitive*** disabilities may participate in the LEAP Connect alternate assessment.

Further, the US Department of Education requires any state that exceeds 1.0% participation in the alternate assessment to review its definition of students with the most significant ***cognitive*** disabilities, and, if necessary, revise.

Currently, our state's criteria allow a student to participate if the student has a disability that significantly impacts ***cognitive function and/or adaptive behavior***.

LDOE is convening a group of experts from across the state to review current policy and national best practice to determine if any adjustments to current policy should be recommended.



[Jamie.Wong@la.gov](mailto:Jamie.Wong@la.gov)